

New claims 1 to 13 -

1. A smoking product produced by the process comprising:

- a. cooking an aqueous slurry of extracted sugar beet pulp with a hydrolyzing agent to release beet pectins;
- b. adding to the cooked slurry a polyvalent metal-cross-linking agent to cross-link the sugar beet pectin molecules into a gel-like binding substance; and then
- c. forming a dried product from the slurry components.

2. A product according to claim 1, wherein the cooked slurry of step (a) is comminuted to shorten fibers and break up fiber bundles.

3. A product according to claim 1, wherein the cooked slurry of step (a) is subjected to a demethylation or saponification step by reacting the sugar beet pectins with an alkaline demethylating or saponifying agent.

4. The product according to claim 3, wherein the cooked slurry of step (a) is comminuted to shorten fibers and break up fiber bundles prior to the addition of the demethylating or saponifying agent.

5. A product according to claim 1 wherein the cross-linking agent is the cation of calcium or magnesium.

6. A product according to claim 3 wherein the cross-linking agent is a cation of calcium or magnesium.

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7. A product according to claim 1 wherein tobacco is present in the dried product.

8. A product according to claim 3 wherein tobacco is present in the dried product.

9. The process for preparing a smoking product from sugar beet pulp comprising the following sequence of steps:

- a. cooking an aqueous slurry of extracted sugar beet pulp in comminuted form with a hydrolyzing agent to release beet pectins;
- b. refining the hydrolyzed product to shorten fibers and break up fiber bundles;
- c. adding to the refined slurry components an alkaline earth metal cross-linking agent to cross-link the beet pectin molecules into a gel-like binding substance; and then
- d. forming a dried product from the slurry components.

10. The process of claim 9 in which the hydrolyzed and refined product of step 9(b) is subjected to a demethylation step by reacting the released beet pectins with an alkaline demethylating agent.

11. The process of claim 10 in which the alkaline demethylating agent is added before the addition of the alkaline earth metal cross-linking agent.

12. The process of claim 10 in which the demethylating agent is added together with the alkaline earth metal cross-linking agent.

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13. The process of claim 10 in which the demethylating agent is at least one of sodium and potassium hydroxide and the cross-linking agent is at least one of calcium and magnesium oxide or hydroxide.

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